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Any man who has in the background of his mind a knowledge of what the library stands for, a good opinion of the library based on good service and continued publicity, ought to be influenced to definite action by a good personal letter.

The FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT: It is not given to many of us to approach a subject from so many directions as Mr. WALTER L. BROWN, librarian of the Buffalo public library, in grappling with the subject of "The breadth and limitations of bookbuying." His all-around experience will make this next paper one of exceptional value to us.

Dr. Thwaites has kindly consented to read the paper for Mr. Brown.

#### BREADTH AND LIMITATIONS OF BOOK BUYING

One of the first principles of public library management is that of adjusting it to the needs of its public, by whom and for whose benefit and pleasure it is supported by the municipality. Upon this proposition there has been no disagreement, as it is self-evident.

Questions of general policy arise when we attempt to decide what is beneficial and what is detrimental, just how far we may go to supply books for special and limited use, and just how far we may respond to the popular taste in the demand for the expenditure of public funds for pleasure.

The breadth and limitation of book buying should be determined by the needs of the public rather than from the ratings of the books which are being published. We should find the books that are best fitted for the people who are to use them, rather than to try to fit the people to the books which we may consider as the most desirable. The questions so often raised as to the admittance to the library shelves of some books of fiction of doubtful morals or the latest piece of erotic literature seem very trivial when we consider the problems that face us in the broad field of library work. The library is a public enterprise for public good, and not merely a coöpera-

tive scheme for the purpose of obtaining cheap reading, nor a bibliographical storehouse. The important question is whether the books we are asked to buy will serve any legitimate end of library service.

Most of our American cities resemble each other in the exceedingly complex character of their population, each of whose varied elements has more or less claim on the services of the public library. While it is not possible to classify definitely the residents of a city for library purposes, there are certain large groups which we may recognize.

In the first place, the public library has to serve, as libraries of all times have served, those who have had all the advantages of systematic education—those in the learned professions and in other walks of life who have had given to them, through college and university training, a wider vision than that of the average citizen; those who have had given to them at least the knowledge of the existence of the store of accumulated thought and of the records of the past. Upon these more fortunate ones rests the responsibility, in a large measure, of carrying the torch of knowledge and civilization a little farther with each generation. The public library does not pretend to act as a guide to this part of the community, but it must serve as its laboratory and as its source of supply.

A second group which includes a large part of our population is made up of those who have had the advantage of the full course of the grammar school, with the smaller number who have had that of the high school. From this group come not only the clerks in our stores and offices, but men in the more skilled occupations, and also many business men and employers of labor. Some of these are existing through gray, narrow, uneventful, toilsome lives, while others take a large and leading part in all that concerns the life of the community and in the moulding of public opinion. It includes men of many creeds and civilizations, prejudices, desires and ambitions; of many degrees of culture and

taste, high and low; influenced by very different inheritance, associations and opportunities.

Some gain through application most of the advantages of the best training, while others not only fail to make use of, but often practically lose the education the city has given them. For the larger number of this group there are great possibilities for good in the means of education and cultivation which are now being provided by the municipality.

How may the public library best meet the needs of these people, so many and so diverse? How may it give to those who lack it that which will enliven, improve, stimulate and cultivate, creating not only the desire for what is best in life, but supplying the essence so far as it may be gained from the stimulus and inspiration of books? How may we give others the practical knowledge that is needed by them in their varied occupations and activities?

Probably the most potential group in our cities is that large one made up of the children of the immigrants. If they can be lifted by education, if their taste can be guided and directed toward better desires, the help which the library is able to give will act as a tremendous force for good. If these children are left alone to indulge in what is vicious and demoralizing in the life of the crowded sections of the cities, they will become a menace to the municipal life. Their parents have little to give them. The schools have on an average a brief five years in which to influence these children, but they do send them out with the power to read English. The public library may exert its influence not only during their school life, but if it acquires a hold upon them at that time, it will continue to be an influence for good upon these future rulers of the city.

Is it not possible, in a small way at least, to cultivate their taste and give them some desire to read what is worth while?

The broad base upon which city life rests is still another group made up usually of the newcomers from many

lands. A very large number have little or no education excepting such as their toil has brought them. Many are able to read their native tongue, but all their traditions and all their lore is that of other lands and literatures. We find that many of the more intelligent among them have brought, in addition to their muscular strength, much that might enrich their adopted country if it could find means of expression. They constitute a danger in our life only when lacking the knowledge of our tongue, our ways and our ideals, and when in ignorance of the adjustment of our government by the popular will, they become the prey of the demagogue. He easily gains a blind following among the ignorant by preaching class hatred and a kind of discontent which is unrighteous.

Library work among these people should not only act as a safeguard, but may prove an opportunity for some at least to attain a broader life by awakening the desire for knowledge and the ability to grow which comes with the reading habit and the knowing how to use books.

The public library has not only to carry out its mission to the individuals of these groups as its part in social advancement, but it has to coöperate in the work of betterment with the schools, and with clubs and "movements" and with all manner of philanthropic and social endeavor.

There is no lack of appreciation of this function of the public library and we need not emphasize it any more than the service which it renders promptly and liberally to the scholars and other leaders of the mental life of the community. If we should fail to recognize our duty in either respect, objection would be promptly expressed.

The real value of a public library as a municipal institution can be best measured by its service toward building up a more intelligent, hopeful and happier citizenship.

It is possible to help the immigrant through the writers of his native tongue which bring him pleasure and pastime.

We may even now help him in his material progress in his new home by giving him elementary books in English, from which he may acquire some knowledge of American institutions and American life, and the time may come when we will be able to do far more with great effect by having American books translated into other tongues for this purpose.

We need to help by far the greater proportion of foreigners to acquire English, because it is a tool which all must have in this country for intelligent bread-winning purposes. We need to study the race history of those represented in the population, and we should know something of their conditions before coming to America; something of their education and their mental development. Many sections of our large cities have different problems in the amalgamation of the population and the library should do what it can to help solve them.

A library agency in the neighborhood of these newcomers is a center of real service and helpfulness. No work shows more definite results, or is appreciated more than that which we do among the immigrants and their children, who are often used as go-betweens by the parents and the library.

While there are many agencies at work upon the children of the immigrant, the library has a very important place and much responsibility. No matter what the other demands may be, we cannot afford to neglect these children, and we must make generous provision to get them interested in good books through the schools and the library.

Between the immigrants and their children at one extreme, and the educational institutions and the scholar at the other, there is that very large group of the community made up of the more or less educated people, concerning whose needs and desires most of the questions on book-buying are raised. This is a reading group. A certain part of it consumes tons and tons of newspapers and cheap magazines, the very names of which are

strange in libraries. This is the reading—perhaps the only reading—of many of them, and we find that they go to the newspapers for the stirring and morbid records of crime, for scandal, for gambling news and other sensational matter, and they are reading the magazines for stories of much the same character.

Such readers crave excitement; they seldom read a book for pleasure, and they have never used the printed page for the purpose of obtaining information since their school days. It seems vital that the public library should find some meeting place with this section of the community. The plane of the cultivated reader has no temptation whatever. One must get down to earth to start growth, and the danger of bending down is far less than that of keeping aloof by reason of too high a standard. It is possible to do this without wholly giving up our demand for good quality, and we may find popular books free from vulgarity and from any pernicious influence, which, if properly used, may create a zest for better books when they are offered.

In selecting books of different grades for the purpose of leading readers from the poorer books to the better, we do, of course, put before the readers of the better books a selection of descending quality. Fortunately, however, there is little danger in this, for there is a safeguard in the fact that a taste for the better books carries with it a dislike to those of inferior quality.

It is well to remember also that even the lightest fiction selected by the library is free from most of the objectionable qualities of the reading indulged in by many readers whom we hope to reach.

As we advance in the scale of our readers, the demands upon the library increase. More and more the library is becoming of commercial use. Not only men of the various industries are finding use for the recorded experiences and the advice of experts in their own lines, but business men are beginning to find great possibilities in the use of books as time-

savers and as a help to efficiency. The use of the book as a tool is becoming constantly greater, and the public library, as a matter of course, is to supply all books which may be so used. It is the plain duty of the public library to make known its ability to help its community in these practical ways.

It would seem that wise book buying would result more often through a study of the city rather than from the searching of book catalogs. The public library perhaps more than any other educational institution may receive help from social surveys, social engineering, and the records of commercial organizations.

If a social survey has not been made of our city, we should at least ascertain the elements which go to make up its population. Let us know the types of people to be reached and their numbers. How many Americans of native stock? How many residents of foreign birth? How many children of foreign born parents? What are the races represented—English speaking, Germanic, Slavic, Latin, etc.? What are the social and economic conditions? What are their occupations? What of their education and æsthetic development? These are pertinent questions for the library.

Then let a search be made for the most attractive books for each group, always remembering that there is a place for sound, clear, elementary books on all subjects, and that these should be duplicated freely. Let the business of the community be analyzed. Are there textile, steel or wood industries? What manufacturing is done, and what raw materials are used? What of its markets? What of its transportation? What authoritative material may we find on all these subjects, and how may we make it of valuable use? What is being done in our city for the fine arts; for natural science; for the study of literature; for religious and ethical teaching? How may we coöperate in all this work by supplying the necessary books? Let there be a thorough understanding of how and where good books may be used, and then

let us consider the breadth and limitation of our book buying.

The FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT: One is tempted to linger over the flavor which has been given to the wording of the next topic, "The open door, through the book and the library; opportunity for comparison and choice; unhampered freedom of choice," and if we do not linger longer on this it is because we know that that flavor will be made permanent after listening to the address itself of the speaker, Mr. CHARLES E. McLENEGAN, librarian of the Milwaukee public library.

#### THE OPEN DOOR, THROUGH THE BOOK AND THE LIBRARY; OP- PORTUNITY FOR COMPARISON AND CHOICE; UNHAMPERED FREEDOM OF CHOICE

A professor in one of our large universities recently complained that college students of the present day are so woefully ignorant of many things that they could reasonably be expected to know. The exciting cause of the professor's outburst was an attempt to get from his class some information about Chanticleer. He was met by conservative and judicious silence until one youth, who was not quite sure, ventured the opinion that it was a popular song sung by Jane Addams. Of course such an answer would irritate a Chicago man, and justly too, when we consider that Miss Addams is what made Chicago famous.

But the wail of the professor provokes the question: Where do all the scholars and thinkers of the world come from? What keeps up the breed? What is it that fills in the ramshackle, ill-jointed, unpromising frame of much of our school product, and returns us so much of fine manhood and womanhood, and so much of the sound learning and ability of the working world? We must, I think, admit that the world is fairly furnished with men and women, intelligent and useful, whom no college can claim. And every college has its quota of dunces who may never be anything else. My professor